

*Sonoma Coast
State Beach*



Please . . . Be Careful

For a safe and enjoyable visit to Sonoma Coast State Beach, please remember: Like most north coast beaches, *Sonoma Coast is not for swimming*, and lifeguard service is not provided. Sleeper waves, backwash, sudden drop-offs, rip currents and the cold water, make even surf play or climbing on nearby rock outcroppings dangerous. From 1950 through 1985, there were 73 known drownings and nearly 80 reported rescues along Sonoma Coast. Most of the drownings occurred at Goat Rock, Wright's Beach, Duncan's Landing and Bodega Head. And most of the victims were adult males either climbing on the rocks and cliffs, playing in the surf or fishing.

If you are caught in the seaward rush of a rip current, sometimes called undertow, do not attempt to swim directly to shore against the strong current. Instead, you may be able to escape by swimming parallel to the shore until you reach the edge of the current. Even if you can't, the current usually dissipates just beyond the surf line. Then, swim around the current and back to shore. Don't get caught in it again.

Another note of caution – be careful of the bluffs and rocks. These shale formations are unstable and unsafe for climbing. Stay on the trails, and heed warning signs and fences.

Tide Pools Are Fragile

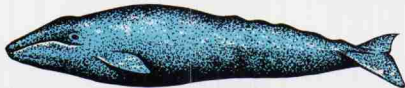
Unless you are looking for a particular food species and have a valid sportfishing license in your possession, don't disturb the life in tide pools. Even the simple act of turning over a rock and exposing these invertebrates to the sun or air can destroy them. Some areas have been stripped nearly clean by collectors and students who perhaps don't realize that these delicate animals will die shortly after their removal from their homes. Many species are now protected by state law – check with park headquarters and with the latest sportfishing regulations for species, season size, and bag limits.

If You Bring Your Dog

Please be sure your dog is on a leash and not allowed to run loose. The leash may not exceed six feet in length. There is an additional charge for each dog that you bring to the park. Also – dogs are not allowed on park hiking trails nor in any of the Willow Creek area.

Whale Watching and Seal Puppings

The high bluffs of Sonoma Coast are perfect for viewing the twice-yearly migration of California gray whales. Rangers lead special whale watching interpretive programs during the whales' December and January migration south to Baja, California and again during March and April when the whales return north. For more information contact Sonoma Coast State Beach.



Sonoma Coast, and especially the mouth of the Russian River, is home for hundreds of harbor seals. Although the seals may appear tame, they frighten easily and, like all wild animals, can inflict serious bites. During the March through June pupping season, people or dogs approaching too closely are serious threats to the pregnant females and newborn pups. Pups are unable to swim, and when left alone on land they are defenseless against predators.

Sonoma Coast State Beach

Broad, shining beaches and secluded coves, rugged headlands and natural arches, and a craggy coastline with tidal pools and reefs characterize one of California's most scenic attractions - Sonoma Coast State Beach.

The Beach, actually a series of beaches separated by rocky bluffs, extends 16 miles from Bodega Head to Russian Gulch, just north of Jenner in Sonoma County. It is accessible to beachcombers, fishermen, sunbathers, and picnickers from more than a dozen points along coast Highway 1.

Generally, north coast weather is a chilling combination of wind and fog. Fortunately, during summer, the morning fog usually burns off by midday making for pleasant afternoons. However, even during summer, be prepared for wet, cold, and windy north coast weather.

Fishing

Sonoma Coast is a fishing paradise. The ocean, bay and river frontage offer many opportunities for sportfishing. Species include rock fish, perch, salmon, steelhead, and smelt. There are also red abalone, mussels and cockles to be found. A valid California sportfishing license is required.

Picnicking

Picnicking is always a popular pastime along California's beautiful coast. There are picnic tables at a few beach access points such as Wright's Beach, Rock Point, Goat Rock, and Russian Gulch, but generally people like to settle down directly on the sand. Restroom facilities are available at most of the day-use areas.

Camping

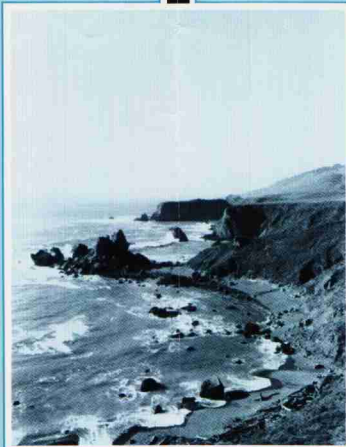
There are 30 developed campsites (no showers) around the edge of Wright's Beach. Bodega Dunes campground has 98 developed campsites with restrooms, a campfire center, hot showers, and a trailer sanitation station. Summer visitors, trying to escape the inland valley heat, flock to the Sonoma Coast beach campgrounds. To be assured of a campsite upon your arrival, it is necessary to make advance reservations in summer and during autumn weekends. Summer camping stays are limited to 10 days. During the remainder of the year the camping limit is 30 days.

Flora

The bluffs, slopes, and dunes of the beach support a hardy ground cover of native shrubs, grasses and wildflowers. The area is unusually beautiful in the spring when the yellow and blue lupine, sea pink, Indian paintbrush, western wallflower, sea fig, sand verbena, western iris, wild strawberry, monkey flower, and dozens of other varieties of wildflowers are all in bloom.

Fauna

Animal life is just as varied. There is the raccoon, gray fox, rabbit, black-tail deer, skunk, ground squirrel, and of course birds. Shorebirds and waterfowl include gulls, cormorants, pelicans, coots, and most species of ducks. Valley quail, ravens wrens, hawks, swallows, and other land birds also abound. Altogether, some 300 species of birds have been listed for the area.



You'll enjoy visiting...

Bodega Head, the rocky headland that forms the entrance into Bodega Harbor. The harbor side provides a popular crabbing area, and the many hiking trails on the ocean side allow access to small, sandy coves and spectacular, scenic cliffs. The high cliffs offer excellent vantage points for observing migrating gray whales.

Goat Rock, in the northern end of the park near the mouth of the Russian River. The scenic shoreline, sandy beach, gentle surf, and fresh and saltwater fishing make this one of the more popular day-use areas. Goat Rock is also one of the best areas from which to view harbor seals.

Shell Beach, a favorite of the beachcomber and stroller. It is used by schools as an outdoor classroom for the study of tidal pool marine life, and enjoys a reputation as a prime fishing spot.

Duncan's Landing, also called Death Rock. It is famous for two things: as an early-day landing for loading small coastal ships with lumber and food products; and for its rock headland being the most dangerous point along the beach because of the large and unpredictable surf. Its spring wildflower displays are spectacular.

Willow Creek, an inland area, just south of the Russian River. There are picnic tables and primitive campsites available near the river and its riparian habitat. Groves of stately coast redwoods grace portions of the Willow Creek area.

Rock Point, a headland overlooking the scenic shoreline. There are several picnic tables available.

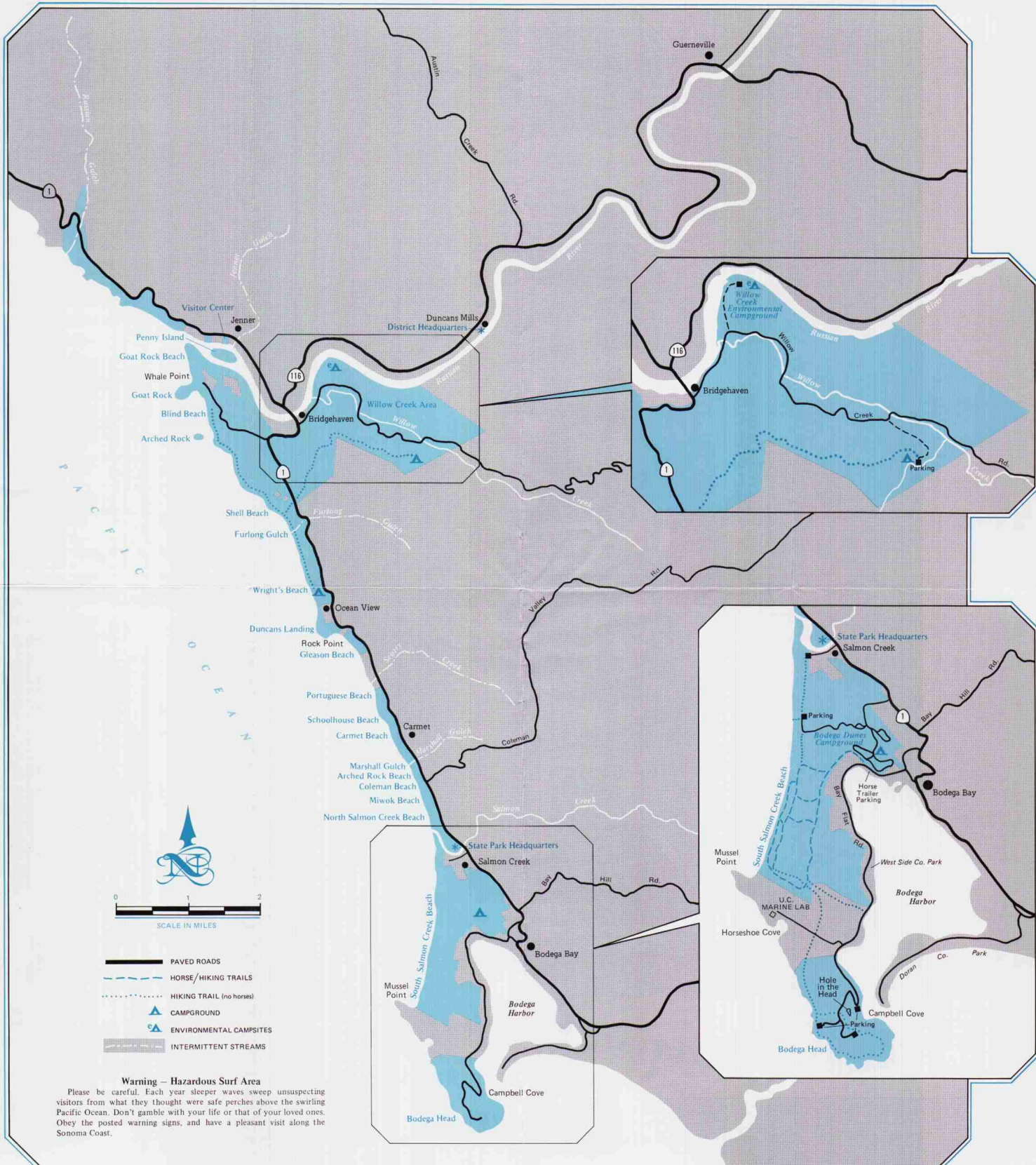
Portuguese Beach, a sandy beach surrounded by rocky headlands. Rock fishing and surf fishing are popular.

Salmon Creek Beach, where a lagoon forms when sand closes the mouth of the stream. Nearly two miles of unbroken sandy beach makes surf fishing and beachcombing the most popular activities along Salmon Creek Beach. Park headquarters is at the north side of Salmon Creek, beside Highway 1.

Sand Dune Stabilization Area. In 1951, a program was begun to stabilize the drifting sand and keep it from filling Bodega Bay. The dunes between the bay and Salmon Creek were planted with various specialized grasses, including European beach grass which is also used to protect dikes in the Netherlands. Fire hazard in this area is high, so please, do not build fires in the dunes area.

Riding and Hiking Trail. For equestrians and hikers, the park has a five-mile trail system in the Bodega Dunes area. Access is at the north end of Bodega Bay at Bay Flat Road. Horses are allowed, via the trail, onto Salmon Creek Beach, but only up to the boardwalk. Horses are not allowed north of the boardwalk. Dogs are not permitted on the trail.





- PAVED ROADS
- HORSE/HIKING TRAILS
- HIKING TRAIL (no horses)
- CAMPGROUND
- ENVIRONMENTAL CAMPSITES
- INTERMITTENT STREAMS

Warning - Hazardous Surf Area

Please be careful. Each year sleeper waves sweep unsuspecting visitors from what they thought were safe perches above the swirling Pacific Ocean. Don't gamble with your life or that of your loved ones. Obey the posted warning signs, and have a pleasant visit along the Sonoma Coast.

Reservations

For camping information such as the location of your nearest walk-in reservations office, and for making reservations (using your Mastercard or Visa) call toll-free: 1-800-446-7275. General state park information is available by calling (916) 445 6477. Camping reservations may be made up to eight weeks in advance and as late as two days prior to your intended arrival date.

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